



BC government uses pretty words like sustainable to justify wolf killings.
Environmentalists, conservation groups and animal rights advocates united against BC wolf management plan. Their message is clear: "Stop killing. Start conserving."

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - British Columbia, April 26, 2014: Wolves. Few species on the planet elicit such intense emotions and efforts to "control". Only in recent decades have we begun to understand the profound and dynamic ecological influences and economic benefits large carnivores such as wolves contribute to the planet. Is government management of these iconic species keeping up?

The Province of British Columbia has spent significant time (the past 16 months) and resources to develop, seek input on, and further refine a wolf management plan for the province of BC. While going through these motions, an overwhelming response against the proposed plan was put forward by the public as well as NGO's. During the short 3-week comment period just prior to Christmas in 2012, 1,614 comments were received AGAINST the proposed plan, urging the government to include more conservation and humane treatment of wolves. There were 2,575 comments received in total during the allotted time period according to a FLNR ministry spokesperson, meaning that approximately 66% of comments were requesting major changes be implemented. Environmentalists, conservation groups and animal welfare advocates would like to ask, "What of the majority of comments requesting more conservation and humane treatment of wolves?"

In BC, Gray wolves, *Canis lupus*, are treated like vermin. Ignored is the evidence that exploited wolf populations lead to smaller and more unstable packs, smaller territories, and more prey killed per capita, and/or alternative prey killed, by these inexperienced wolf packs^{i,ii}. All of this can increase conflicts with humans, who see wolves as competitors for livestock as well as wild game.

More than just pretty pictures, these iconic animals contribute to critical natural processes such as carbon storage, disease control, stream morphology, vegetation growth, mesopredator control, and more^{iii,v,vi,vii}. Understanding the dynamic role large carnivores have ecologically should help foster coexistence, but the opposite is underway according to a wolf management plan released by the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR) April 17. The government has continued to further relax hunting and trapping policies, as well as hired trappers and funded Conservation Officers in recent years to kill wolves. The government has been engaging in sterilization experiments and government control ("kill") for more than a decade and want to continue to, although the plan admits these programs have not resulted in any measurable benefits for caribou, despite nearly all of the wolves being killed in these caribou recovery areas. In more than half of the province, hunters can now kill an unlimited number of wolves 365 days of the year. In other words, FLNR has completely ignored the wishes of 66% of the public respondents to the original draft plan who asked for MORE humane implementations and conservation goals. The allowable use of bait, neck snares, and motorized vehicles to kill wolves is completely out of sync with any concept of "Fair Chase".

What's missing from the plan? The incredible social nature and family bonds shared among this intelligent species. Many wolf biologists argue that allowing wolves to express their natural social behaviour benefits the wider ecosystem as well as wolves. The BC government wants to kill wolves for sport, to appease ranchers, and to help save endangered species with a record high number of wolves being killed across the province through hunting and trapping since recording began in 1976. The plan continues to condone widespread killing the guestimated population of 5,300 - 11,600, while neglecting to recognize ANY threats to wolves because cumulative impacts are ignored. Concerns from several interest groups arise over this plan's condoning of killing for amusement purposes and the lack of recognition of the intrinsic value of this sentient animal, which has evolved over millennia.

A preliminary wolf management plan for BC put forward in 1979 included several goals and objectives pertaining to preserving wolf social stability, providing educational outreach, respecting intrinsic value, and establishing areas of protection that have been left out of the current plan. Is British Columbia going backwards?

Decision-makers have refused to perform a proper peer-review of the plan outside of government. There is no accountability factored into the grossly exaggerated view of wolf impacts on the livestock industry presented, however this usually amounts to less than 3% of all livestock deaths^{iv}, as a review of government and cattleman statistics will reveal.



Environmental groups remain concerned that the wolf plan and current management methods lack a truly ecological foundation. Many argue that conservation, ecology, wolf social dynamics and ethical considerations were left out of this plan and an apparent pre-determined agenda to legitimize and even encourage killing wolves has been exposed.

Sadie Parr, a spokesperson for the group Wolf Awareness Inc. is not only concerned about what is IN the plan, but what else is MISSING from it as well;

Many scientists agree that all management plans for large carnivores should be based on conservation. At the very least, this plan needs to include protected refuges for wolves and other large carnivores in areas large enough to ensure unique genetic identity is preserved and a vibrant future possible.

Parr adds;

Wolves are social animals. More than just numbers. Sustainable numbers do not necessarily mean that a wolf population is functioning naturally. Wolf social systems may be just as important as their numbers. It is the wolf pack that is the top predator, not the individual wolf. Their social bonds and kin-based families define what it means to be a wolf. Management plans need to take this into account.

As wild habitat decreases large carnivores are brought into closer proximity to humans, and the issue shifts from the biological needs of wolves to the tolerance of humans. How willing are we to share the landscape with large carnivores? And who is in charge of these decisions? In a global biodiversity crisis and with predator-prey systems becoming more rare around the planet, we are ALL shareholders in the future of wolves in British Columbia.

Not only do wolves demonstrate a very high value to society and the planet, but they are also highly intelligent and sensitive. Their intrinsic value and ecological role are worthy of preservation.

The Province must take some essential steps to reverse its track record of inadequate resource protection, under-regulated resource use, and under-achieving public process. To do this, the British Columbia Wolf Conservation and Management Plan must make some major changes.

Wolf Awareness Inc is partnering with many groups across North America to urge a greater respect for this top predator, and asking for the plan to be IMMEDIATELY amended to include recommendations put forward by qualified non-government biologists, the IUCN as well as the 1979 preliminary plan.

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High resolution wolf images available for use upon request.

Works Cited:

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^{iv} Muhly, T., & Musiani, M. (2009). Livestock depredation by wolves and the ranching economy in the Northwestern US. *Ecological Economics* 68 (8–9): 2439–2450.

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